

# A Book that Influenced Me

It was rather a little book, and that introduces my first point. One's impulse, on tackling the question of influence, is to search for a great book, and to assume that here is the force which has moulded one's outlook and character. Looking back upon my own half-century of reading, I have no doubt which my three great books have been: Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. All three are great both in quality and in bulk. Bulk is not to be despised. Combined with quality, it gives a long book a pull over a short one, and permits us to call it monumental. Here are three monuments. But they have not influenced me in the least, though I came across them all at an impressionable age. They impressed me by their massiveness and design, and made me feel small in the right way, and to make us feel small in the right way is a function of art; men can only make us feel small in the wrong way. But to realize the vastness of the universe, the limits of human knowledge, the even narrower limits of human power, to catch a passing glimpse of the medieval universe, or of the Roman Empire on its millennial way, or of Napoleon collapsing against the panorama of Russian daily life—that is not to be influenced. It is to be extended. Perhaps those three books were too monumental, and human beings are not much influenced by monuments. They gaze, say "Oh!" and pass on unchanged. They are more likely to be influenced by objects nearer their own size. Anyhow, that has been my own case.

The book in question is Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, a work of genius, but with Dante, Gibbon and Tolstoy setting our standards not to be called great. It has been better described as "a serious book not written too seriously".

Published as far back as 1872, it is difficult to classify—partly a yarn, partly an account of Utopia, partly a satire on Victorian civilization. It opens with some superb descriptions of mountain scenery; this part is taken from Butler's New Zealand experiences. The hero is a bit of a scamp, and not so much a living character

as a vehicle for the author's likes and dislikes, and for his mischievousness. He has left England under a cloud for a distant colony, with the intention of converting some lost tribe to Christianity at a handsome profit. He hears that beyond the mountain range there are terrible figures, and still more terrible sounds. He sets out, and presently discovers enormous and frightful statues, through whose hollow heads the wind moans. They are the guardians of Erewhon. Struggling past them, he enters the unknown country, and the fantasy proper begins. The descent on the further side beyond the statues is exquisitely related, and the scenery now suggests the Italian slopes of the Alps. He is politely imprisoned by the mountaineers until instructions as to his disposal can come up from the capital. But there are two hitches. One of them occurs when his watch is discovered on him. The other is with his jailer's daughter, Yram (Erewhonian for Mary). He and she get on well, and when he catches a cold he makes the most of it, in the hope of being cosseted by her. She flies into a fury.

By now he has learned the language, and is summoned to the capital. He is to be the guest of a Mr Nosnibor, and the account of Mr Nosnibor puzzles him. "He is," says his informant, "a delightful man . . . and has but lately recovered from embezzling a large sum of money under singularly distressing circumstances . . . you are sure to like him." What can this all mean? It's wrong to have a watch, wrong to catch a cold, but embezzlement is only a subject for sympathy. The reader is equally puzzled, and skilfully does Butler lead us into the heart of this topsy-turvy country, without explaining its fantasies too soon. Take the Musical Banks. Erewhon, it seems, has two banking systems, one of them like ours, the other is Musical Banking. Mr Nosnibor, as befits a dubious financier, goes constantly to the first sort of bank, but never attends the offices of the second, though he is ostensibly its ardent supporter. Mrs Nosnibor and her daughters go once a week. Each bank has its own coinage, the coins of the musical banks being highly esteemed, but of no commercial value, as the hero soon discovers when he tries to tip one of its officials with them. Just as in Swift we read for a bit about the Yahoos without realizing that he intends them for ourselves, so we read about the Musical Banks, and only gradually realize that they caricature the Church of England and its connections with capitalism. There was a great row over this chapter as soon as it was understood; the "*enfant terrible*", as he called himself, had indeed heaved a brick.

He also shocked people by reversing the positions of crime and illness. In Erewhon it is wicked to be ill—that is why Yram was angry when the hero had a cold. Embezzlement, on the other hand, is a disease. Mr Nosnibor is treated for it professionally and very severely. "Poor papa," says his charming daughter, "I really do not think he will steal any more." And as for possessing a watch—all machinery invented after a certain date has been destroyed by the Erewhonians, lest it breeds new machines, who may enslave men. And there are further brilliant inventions—for instance, the Colleges of Unreason, who teach a Hypothetical Language, never used outside their walls, and in whom we must reluctantly recognize the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and their schools of Latin and Greek. And there is the worship of the goddess Ydgrun (Mrs Grundy); the worship is mostly bad, yet it produces a few fine people, the high Ydgrunites. These people were conventional in the right way: they hadn't too many ideals, and they were always willing to drop a couple to oblige a friend. In the high Ydgrunites we come to what Butler thought desirable. Although a rebel, he was not a reformer. He believed in the conventions, provided they are observed humanely. Grace and graciousness, good temper, good looks, good health and good sense; tolerance, intelligence, and willingness to abandon any moral standard at a pinch. That is what he admired.

The book ends, as it began, in the atmosphere of adventure. The hero elopes with Miss Nosnibor in a balloon. The splendid descriptions of natural scenery are resumed, they fall into the sea and are rescued, and we leave him as Secretary of the Erewhon Evangelization Company in London, asking for subscriptions for the purpose of converting the country to Christianity with the aid of a small expeditionary force. "An uncalled-for joke?" If you think so, you have fallen into one of Butler's little traps. He wanted to make uncalled-for jokes. He wanted to write a serious book not too seriously.

Why did this book influence me? For one thing, I have the sort of mind which likes to be taken unawares. The frontal full-dress presentation of an opinion often repels me, but if it be insidiously slipped in sideways I may receive it, and Butler is a master of the oblique. Then, what he had to say was congenial, and I lapped it up. It was the food for which I was waiting. And this brings me to my next point. I suggest that the only books that influence us are those for which we are ready, and which

have gone a little further down our particular path than we have yet got ourselves. I suggest, furthermore, that when you feel that you could almost have written the book yourself—that's the moment when it's influencing you. You are not influenced when you say, "How marvellous! What a revelation! How monumental! Oh!" You are being extended. You are being influenced when you say, "I might have written that myself if I hadn't been so busy." I don't suppose that I could have written the *Divine Comedy* or the *Decline and Fall*. I don't even think I could have written the *Antigone* of Sophocles, though of all the great tragic utterances that comes closest to my heart, that is my central faith. But I do think (quite erroneously) that I could have turned out this little skit of *Erewhon* if the idea of it had occurred to me. Which is strong evidence that it has influenced me.

*Erewhon* also influenced me in its technique. I like that idea of fantasy, of muddling up the actual and the impossible until the reader isn't sure which is which, and I have sometimes tried to do it when writing myself. However, I mustn't start on technique. Let me rather get in an observation which was put to me the other day by a friend. What about the books which influence us negatively, which give us the food we don't want, or, maybe, are unfit for, and so help us to realize what we do want? I have amused myself by putting down four books which have influenced me negatively. They are books by great writers, and I have appreciated them. But they are not my sort of book. They are: the *Confessions* of St Augustine, Macchiavelli's *Prince*, Swift's *Gulliver*, and Carlyle on *Heroes and Hero Worship*. All these books have influenced me negatively, and impelled me away from them towards my natural food. I know that St Augustine's *Confessions* is a "good" book, and I want to be good. But not in St Augustine's way. I don't want the goodness which entails an asceticism close to cruelty. I prefer the goodness of William Blake. And Macchiavelli—he is clever—and unlike some of my compatriots I want to be clever. But not with Macchiavelli's cold, inhuman cleverness. I prefer the cleverness of Voltaire. And indignation—Swift's indignation in *Gulliver* is too savage for me; I prefer Butler's in *Erewhon*. And strength—yes, I want to be strong, but not with the strength of Carlyle's dictator heroes, who foreshadow Hitler. I prefer the strength of Antigone.

[1944]

## A BOOK THAT INFLUENCED ME

- E.M. Forster

The essay **A Book That Influenced Me** is taken from Forster's **Two Cheers for Democracy**, which contains essays on wide ranging topics. In the present essay he says that Samuel Butler's **Erewhon** is the book which has exercised a strong influence on him.

Forster begins his essay by stating that great classics will be readers' choice if asked to mention the books which influenced him most. Forster says that he was impressed by three monumental books namely Dante's **Divine Comedy**, Gibbon's **Decline and Fall** and Tolstoy's **War and Peace**. Such great books may strike the readers with their grandeur. But one cannot say that they would influence an avid reader. So he says that a book can influence a person when he is ready to absorb the contents of the book. In a way his book will enlarge his vision and understanding. Only such books can be said to have influenced a person. Sometimes after reading such books one may get the feeling that he could have written such a book.

Forster admits that Samuel Butler's **Erewhon** has influenced him deeply. He gives an outline of the story. The hero of the novel is a scamp who leaves for a distant colony with the aim of converting the natives to Christianity. He finds it a strange land where one can find huge and frightful statues with hollow heads through which the wind makes the noises. Soon he is imprisoned by the guards of the kingdom. The offence committed by him is his possession of watch. He falls in love with Yram, the jailer's daughter who was angry for he has caught cold.

The hero finds stranger things in the capital. He is surprised to hear a person accused of misappropriation has recovered from the disease. The people too have strange attitude in regard to various issues. The people would not accept anything after a particular date. There are Musical Banks whose coins are different. There is a College of Unreason where research is done on hypothetical language. After seeing all these things, the hero escapes from the island with Yram.

Then Forster explains the reasons why it has influenced him. First the novel is satiric. The topsy turvy approach is adopted to criticise the contemporary society. Butler laughs at many of the habits and follies of the Englishmen. For example The Musical Banks stand for Church of England and College of Unreason stands of Oxford and Cambridge. Hypothetical languages refer to Latin and Greek which are considered dead languages. There criminals are treated as patients. The colonisation motives of the British are made fun of through the collection of funds for the formation of an expeditionary force.

The reasons for his choice are as follows. After reading the book, he felt that he could have written it. Next the novelist has adopted a technique which is a blend of realism and fantasy. Finally the book is full of strange machines. So Forster concludes that the book has made a strong influence on him.

## V. THE CHALLENGE OF OUR TIME

Temperamentally, I am an individualist. Professionally I am a writer, and my books emphasize the importance of personal relationships and the private life, for I believe in them. What can a man with such an equipment, and with no technical knowledge, say about the Challenge of our Time? Like everyone else, I can see that our world is in a terrible mess, and having been to India last winter I know that starvation and frustration can reach proportions unknown to these islands. Wherever I look, I can see, in the striking phrase of Robert Bridges, 'the almighty cosmic Will fidgeting in a trap'. But who set the trap, and how was it sprung? If I knew, I might be able to unfasten it. I do not know. How can I answer a challenge which I cannot interpret? It is like shouting defiance at a big black here, I think. Professor Bernal does not. He perceives very precisely what the Challenge of our Time is and what is the answer to it. Professor Bernal's perceptions are probably stronger than mine. They are certainly more selective, and many things which interest or upset me do not enter his mind at all — or enter it in the form of cards to be filed for future use.

I belong to the fag-end of Victorian liberalism, and can look back to an age whose challenges were moderate in their tone, and the cloud on whose horizon was no bigger than a man's hand. In many ways it was

an admirable age. It practised benevolence and philanthropy, was humane and intellectually curious, upheld free speech, had little colour-prejudice, believed that individuals are and should be different, and entertained a sincere faith in the progress of society. The world was to become better and better, chiefly through the spread of parliamentary institutions. The education I received in those far-off and fantastic days made me soft and I am very glad it did, for I have seen plenty of hardness since, and I know it does not even pay. Think of the end of Mussolini — the hard man, hanging upside-down like a turkey, with his dead mistress swinging beside him. But though the education was humane it was imperfect, in as much as we none of us realised our economic position. In came the nice fat dividends, up rose the lofty thoughts, and we did not realise that all the time we were exploiting the poor of our own country and the backward races abroad, and getting bigger profits from our investments than we should. We refused to face this unpalatable truth. I remember being told as a small boy, 'Dear, don't talk about money, it's ugly' — a good example that of Victorian defence mechanism.

All that has changed in the present century. The dividends have shrunk to decent proportions and have in some cases disappeared. The poor have kicked. The backward races are kicking — and more power to their boots. Which means that life has become less comfortable for the Victorian liberal, and that our outlook, which seems to me admirable, has lost the basis of golden sovereigns upon which it originally rose, and now hangs over the abyss. I indulge in these reminiscences because they lead to the point I want to make.

If we are to answer the Challenge of our Time successfully we must manage to combine the new economy and the old morality. The doctrine of *laissez-faire* will not work in the material world. It has led to the black market and the capitalist jungle. We must have planning and ration books and controls, or millions of people will have nowhere to live and nothing to eat. On the other hand, the doctrine of *laissez-faire* is the only one that seems to work in the world of the spirit; if you plan and control men's minds you stunt them, you get the censorship, the secret police, the road to serfdom, the community of slaves. Our economic planners sometimes laugh at us when we are afraid of totalitarian tyranny resulting from their efforts — or rather they sneer at us, for there is some deep connection between planning and sneering which psychologists should explore. But the danger they brush aside is a real one. They assure us that the new economy will evolve an appropriate morality, and that when all people are properly fed and housed, they will have an outlook which will be right, because they are the people. I cannot swallow that. I have no mystic faith in the people. I have in the individual. He seems to me a divine achievement and I mistrust any view which belittles him. If anyone calls you a wretched little individual — and I've been called that — don't you take it lying down. You are important because everyone else is an individual too — including the person who criticises you. In asserting your personality you are playing for your side.

That then is the slogan with which I would answer, or partially answer, the Challenge of our Time. We want the New Economy with the Old Morality. We want

planning for the body and not for the spirit. But the difficulty is this: where does the body stop and the spirit start? In the Middle Ages a hard and fast line was drawn between them, and according to the mediaeval theory of the Holy Roman Empire men rendered their bodies to Caesar and their souls to God. But the theory did not work. The Emperor, who represented Caesar, collided in practice with the Pope, who represented Christ. And we find ourselves in a similar dilemma today. Suppose you are planning the world-distribution of food. You can't do that without planning world population. You can't do that without regulating the number of births and interfering with family life. You must supervise parenthood. You are meddling with the realms of the spirit, of personal relationship, although you may not have intended to do so. And you are brought back again to that inescapable arbiter, your own temperament. When there is a collision of principles would you favour the individual at the expense of the community as I would? Or would you prefer economic justice for all at the expense of personal freedom?

In a time of upheaval like the present, this collision of principles, this split in one's loyalties, is always occurring. It has just occurred in my own life. I was brought up as a boy in one of the home counties, in a district which I still think the loveliest in England. There is nothing special about it — it is agricultural land, and could not be described in terms of beauty spots. It must always have looked much the same. I have kept in touch with it, going back to it as to an abiding city and still visiting the house which was once my home, for it is occupied by friends. A farm is through the hedge, and when the farmer there was eight

years old and I was nine, we used to jump up and down on his grandfather's straw ricks and spoil them. Today he is a grandfather himself, so that I have the sense of five generations continuing in one place. Life went on there as usual until this spring. Then someone who was applying for a permit to lay a water pipe was casually informed that it would not be granted since the whole area had been commandeered. Commandeered for what? Had not the war ended? Appropriate officials of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning now arrived from London and announced that a satellite town for 60,000 people is to be built. The people now living and working there are doomed; it is death in life for them and they move in a nightmare. The best agricultural land has been taken, they assert; the poor land down by the railway has been left; compensation is inadequate. Anyhow, the satellite town has finished them off as completely as it will obliterate the ancient and delicate scenery. Meteorite town would be a better name. It has fallen out of a blue sky.

'Well,' says the voice of planning and progress, 'Why this sentimentality? People must have houses.' They must, and I think of working-class friends in north London who have to bring up four children in two rooms, and many are even worse off than that. But I cannot equate the problem. It is a collision of loyalties. I cannot free myself from the conviction that something irreplaceable has been destroyed, and that a little piece of England has died as surely as if a bomb had hit it. I wonder what compensation there is in the world of the spirit, for the destruction of the life here, the life of tradition.



These are personal reminiscences and I am really supposed to be speaking from the standpoint of the creative artist. But you will gather what a writer, who also cares for men and women and for the countryside, must be feeling in the world today. Uncomfortable, of course. Sometimes miserable and indignant. But convinced that a planned change must take place if the world is not to disintegrate, and hopeful that in the new economy there may be a sphere both for human relationships, and for the despised activity known as art. What ought the writer, the artist, to do when faced by the Challenge of our Time? Briefly, he ought to express what he wants and not what he is told to express by the planning authorities. He ought to impose a discipline on himself rather than accept one from outside. And that discipline may be aesthetic, rather than social or moral; he may wish to practise art for art's sake. That phrase has been foolishly used and often raises a giggle. But it is a profound phrase. It indicates that art is a self-contained harmony. Art is valuable not because it is educational (though it may be), not because it is recreative (though it may be), not because everyone enjoys it (for everybody does not), even because it has to do with beauty. It is valuable because it has to do with order, and creates little worlds of its own, possessing internal harmony, in the bosom of this disordered planet. It is needed at once and now. It is needed before it is appreciated and independent of appreciation. The idea that it should not be permitted until it receives communal acclaim and unless it is for all, is perfectly absurd. It is the activity which brought man out of original darkness and differentiates him from the beasts, and we must continue to practise and respect it through the darkness of today.

I am speaking like an intellectual, but the intellectual, to my mind, is more in touch with humanity than is the confident scientist, who patronises the past, over-simplifies the present, and envisages a future where his leadership will be accepted. Owing to the political needs of the moment, the scientist occupies an abnormal position, which he tends to forget. He is subsidised by the terrified governments who need his aid, pampered and sheltered as long as he is obedient, and prosecuted under Official Secrets Acts when he has been naughty. All this separates him from ordinary men and women and makes him unfit to enter into their feelings. It is high time he came out of his ivory laboratory. We want him to plan for our bodies. We do not want him to plan for our minds, and we cannot accept, so far, his assurance that he will not.

(1946)

## THE CHALLENGE OF OUR TIME - E.M.FORSTER

E.M. Forster, in this essay, "The Challenge of Our Time", call himself an individualist, whose books focus on the importance of personal relationship and private life. As an individualist, he understands the problem faced by this world. Through this essay, he describes the problem 'the struggle of the spirit to cope with the modern world' -, which, according to him, is the greatest challenge, faced by mankind.

Having witnessed the terrible period between the two World Wars, Forster looks back at the Victorian era that was really a wonderful period. It was a period of generosity and humanism, in which education was given a lot of importance. But the problem with Victorian education was that it did not make people understand their economic position. When money came in the form of fat dividends, people never realized that the poor were being exploited for them to get so much money.

In the Modern Age, however, dividends have reduced to almost nothing. The poor and the backward classes no longer allow themselves to be exploited. Therefore, in order to face this challenge, we must combine the old values with the New Economy. According to Forster, 'laissez-faire' (free trade) will

not work in today's world. In the present day, planning has to be done not merely for the body, but for the spirit.

Forster feels that every artist has a task to perform while facing the challenge of our time. Artists must be free to voice their views. Their aim must be to provide art for art's sake and not for moral or social purposes. In other words, Forster says that art is the greatest inspiration for mankind. It frees his mind from the problems caused by the modern age.

The intellectual is definitely closer to humanity than the scientist. This is because the scientist is under a lot of pressure and control. He is isolated by mankind and does not get a chance to come closer to society. Forster says that the scientist must respect the individual's thoughts and feelings, though his scientific inventions are for the benefit of society in general. Only when individual feelings are given importance can we face the challenge of our time.

## MY WOOD E. M. FORSTER

A few years ago I wrote a book which dealt in part with the difficulties of the English in India. Feeling that they would have had no difficulties in India themselves, the Americans read the book freely. The more they read it the better it made them feel, and a cheque to the author was the result. I bought a wood with the cheque. It is not a large wood--it contains scarcely any trees, and it is intersected, blast it, by a public footpath. Still, it is the first property that I have owned, so it is right that other people should participate in my shame, and should ask themselves, in accents that will vary in horror, this very important question: What is the effect of property upon the character? Don't let's touch economics; the effect of private ownership upon the community as a whole is another question--a more important question, perhaps, but another one. Let's keep to psychology. If you own things, what's their effect on you? What's the effect on me of my wood?

In the first place, it makes me feel heavy. Property does have this effect. Property produces men of weight, and it was a man of weight who failed to get into the Kingdom of Heaven. He was not wicked, that unfortunate millionaire in the parable, he was only stout; he struck out in front, not to mention behind, and as he wedged himself this way and that in the crystalline entrance and bruised his well-fed flanks, he saw beneath him a comparatively slim camel passing through the eye of a needle and being woven into the robe of God. The Gospels all through couple stoutness and slowness. They point out what is perfectly obvious, yet seldom realized: that if you have a lot of things you cannot move about a lot, that furniture requires dusting, dusters require servants, servants require insurance stamps, and the whole tangle of them makes you think twice before you accept an invitation to dinner or go for a bathe in the Jordan. Sometimes the Gospels proceed further and say with Tolstoy that property is sinful; they approach the difficult ground of asceticism here, where I cannot follow them. But as to the immediate effects of property on people, they just show straightforward logic. It produces men of weight. Men of weight cannot, by definition, move like the lightning from the East unto the West, and the ascent of a fourteen-stone bishop into a pulpit is thus the exact antithesis of the coming of the Son of Man. My wood makes me feel heavy.

In the second place, it makes me feel it ought to be larger.

The other day I heard a twig snap in it. I was annoyed at first, for I thought that someone was BlackBerrying, and depreciating the value of the undergrowth. On coming nearer, I saw it was not a man who had trodden on the twig and snapped it, but a bird, and I felt pleased. My bird. The bird was not equally pleased. Ignoring the relation between us, it took fright as soon as it saw the shape of my face, and flew straight over the boundary hedge into a field, the property of Mrs. Henessy, where it sat down with a loud squawk. It had become Mrs. Henessy's bird. Something seemed grossly amiss here, something that would not have occurred had the wood been larger. I could not afford to buy Mrs. Henessy out, I dared not murder her, and limitations of this sort beset me on every side. Ahab did not want that vineyard--he only needed it to round off his property, preparatory to plotting a new curve--and all the land around my wood has become necessary to me in order to round off the wood. A boundary protects. But--poor little thing--the boundary ought in its turn to be protected. Noises on the edge of it. Children throw stones. A little more, and then a little more, until we reach the sea. Happy Canute! Happier Alexander! And after all, why should even the world be the limit of possession? A rocket containing a Union Jack, will, it is hoped, be shortly fired at the moon. Mars. Sirius. Beyond which . . . . But these immensities ended by saddening me. I could not suppose that my wood was the destined nucleus of universal dominion--it is so very small and contains no mineral wealth beyond the blackberries. Nor was I comforted when Mrs. Henessy's bird took alarm for the second time and flew clean away from us all, under the belief that it belonged to itself.

In the third place, property makes its owner feel that he ought to do something to it. Yet he isn't sure what. A restlessness comes over him, a vague sense that he has a personality to express-- the same sense which, without any vagueness, leads the artist to an act of creation. Sometimes I think I will cut down such trees as remain in the wood, at other times I want to fill up the gaps between them with new trees. Both impulses are pretentious and empty. They are not honest movements towards money-making or beauty. They spring from a foolish desire to express myself and from an inability to enjoy what I have got. Creation, property, enjoyment form a sinister trinity in the human mind. Creation and enjoyment are both very, very good, yet they are often unattainable without a material basis, and at such moments property pushes itself in as a substitute, saying, "Accept me instead--I'm good enough for all there." It is not enough. It is, as Shakespeare said of lust, "The expense of spirit in a waste

of shame": it is "Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream." Yet we don't know how to shun it. It is forced on us by our economic system as the alternative to starvation. It is also forced on us by an internal defect in the soul, by the feeling that in property may lie the germs of self-development and of exquisite or heroic deeds. Our life on earth is, and ought to be, material and carnal. But we have not yet learned to manage our materialism and carnality properly; they are still entangled with the desire for ownership, where (in the words of Dante) "Possession is one with loss."

And this brings us to our fourth and final point: the blackberries.

Blackberries are not plentiful in this meagre grove, but they are easily seen from the public footpath which traverses it, and all too easily gathered. Foxgloves, too--people will pull up the foxgloves, and ladies of an educational tendency even grub for toadstools to show them on the Monday in class. Other ladies, less educated, roll down the bracken in the arms of their gentlemen friends. There is paper, there are tins. Pray, does my wood belong to me or doesn't it? And, if it does, should I not own it best by allowing no one else to walk there? There is a wood near Lyme Regis, also cursed by a public footpath, where the owner has not hesitated on this point. He has built high stone walls each side of the path, and has spanned it by bridges, so that the public circulate like termites while he gorges on the blackberries unseen. He really does own his wood, this able chap. Dives in Hell did pretty well, but the gulf dividing him from Lazarus could be traversed by vision, and nothing traverses it here. And perhaps I shall come to this in time. I shall wall in and fence out until I really taste the sweets of property. Enormously stout, endlessly avaricious, pseudo-creative, intensely selfish, I shall weave upon my forehead the quadruple crown of possession until those nasty Bolshies come and take it off again and thrust me aside into the outer darkness.

## MY WOOD E. M. FORSTER

Edward Morgan Forster (1879 - 1970) was an English novelist, short story writer and essayist. His famous works are A Room with a View, Howards End and A Passage to India. Forster's works often describe the impact of social conventions on common human relationships. "My Wood", is describes Forster's opinion about the possession of a small property he bought with the royalties from his book. The purpose of this essay is to show the effects produced by owning property.

According to E. M. Forster, the effect of owning a property is four fold. In the first place, Property produces men of weight, and it was a man of weight who failed to get into the Kingdom of Heaven. If one has a lot of things he cannot move about a lot. His wood made him feel heavy.

In the second place, it made him feel it ought to be larger. When he saw a bird which was in his wood he felt it was 'his' bird. When it flew away into the property of Mrs. Henessy, he felt sad. He also felt that it would have been his bird if he had owned that property too.

In the third place, property makes its owner feel that he ought to do something to it. Sometimes Forster thought of cutting down the trees in the wood, at other times he wanted to fill up the gaps between them with new trees. He feels that the thoughts spring from a foolish desire to express himself and from an inability to enjoy what I have got. According to Forster, our life on earth is material and carnal. But we have not yet learned to manage our materialism and carnality properly.

In the fourth place, owning a property makes its owner utterly selfish. Forster saw people plucking blackberries and foxgloves. He wanted to have all for himself. He thought of erecting a large wall to block the public path and to prevent others from enjoying his wood.

Thus, according to Forster, owning a property makes the owner enormously stout, endlessly avaricious, pseudo-creative and intensely selfish. He shows a humorously negative attitude to his experience of obtaining land using biblical allusions, the manipulation of sentences and word choice.